

C1
cont wherein said activation is performed in the absence of sperm and wherein said maintaining step indicates that the oocyte is activated.

C2 ~~Sub D2~~ 5. (twice amended) A method of inhibiting oocyte activation during fertilization *in vitro*, the method comprising:
contacting said oocyte with a nitric oxide synthase inhibitor; and
contacting said oocyte with sperm,
wherein said oocyte is inhibited from activation during fertilization *in vitro*.

C3 ~~Sub D3~~ 15. (twice amended) A method of activating an oocyte *in vitro*, the method comprising:
contacting said oocyte with nitric oxide (NO), an NO donor, nitric oxide synthase (NOS),
or inducer of NOS;
contacting said oocyte with sperm; and
maintaining said oocyte until the oocyte has undergone at least one cell division,
wherein said maintaining step indicates that the oocyte is activated.

Please cancel claim 16.

II. REMARKS

Formal Matters

Claims 1, 3-5, 13, and 15 are pending after entry of the amendments set forth herein.

Claims 1, 3-5, 13, 15 and 16 were examined. Claims 1, 3-5, 13, 15 and 16 were rejected.

No claims were allowed.

Claims 1, 5 and 15 are amended. The amendments to the claims were made solely in the interest of expediting prosecution, and are not to be construed as an acquiescence to any objection or rejection of any claim. Support for the amendment to Claim 1 may be found throughout the specification, in particular at the following location: page 5, line 29, wherein language reciting reentry into the cell cycle can be found, and in Claim 16. Claim 15 has been amended so that it is now an independent claim. Support for the amendment of Claim 5 can be found in the original Claim 5. Accordingly, no new matter is added by these amendments.

Please replace Claims 1, 5 and 15 with the clean version provided above.

Claim 16 is canceled without prejudice to renewal, without intent to acquiesce to any rejection, and without intent to surrender any subject matter encompassed by the canceled claims. Applicants expressly reserve the right to pursue any canceled subject matter in one or more continuation and/or divisional applications.